Imagine this...

Activity Guide
Imagine this... Story Writing Contest
Welcome!

Writing is an important skill that students will increasingly use as they progress through school and life. Some students will excel in writing more than others; however, every student will be tested on their proficiency of it in school. Students will be required to write not only in their English class, but in their science, history and social science courses as well.

The Imagine this... Story Writing Contest, when used in the classroom as an instructional tool, can become a resource that motivates students to practice their writing skills. After submitting their fictional or non-fictional stories, students are eligible to receive several prizes on a regional and state level. Regional winners receive a plaque, a children’s literature book about agriculture, and resources for their teachers. State winners receive a medal, an e-reader, and a trip to Sacramento for a special Imagine this... ceremony and reception. Every student who participates get a FREE packet of seeds!

The biggest motivation for students from this contest is to be published in the Imagine this... Stories Inspired by Agriculture book. High school students from the Sacramento area illustrate the six state winning stories. The stories and illustrations are published into the book that is distributed throughout the state.

The following guide was developed to assist teachers in using Imagine this... in the classroom. The activities are designed to engage students in the importance of reading and writing as well as in the importance of the agricultural industry.

Our goal is to demonstrate that agricultural themes can be used as vehicles for teaching current California Education Standards.

Past state winning stories can be found at http://learnaboutag.org/programs/contest_books.cfm. Please use these stories as tools in the lessons and activities found in this guide.

California Foundation for Agriculture in the Classroom is dedicated to encouraging a greater awareness about agriculture’s influence on our daily lives. As a non-profit educational organization, the Foundation provides educational resources and programs that inform students and teachers about agriculture. To request a free teacher resource packet that can enhance the use of this guide, call 1-800-700-AITC (2482) or email Info@LearnAboutAg.org.
Activity 1: Researching – Interview an Agriculturist

Chances are students have not stopped to think about where the products in their lunch come from or the many agricultural products grown in their own county. This exercise is designed to connect students to aspects of local agriculture while learning the beginning steps of using research to write a story.

Teachers, make an appointment for an interview with a local farmer, county ag commissioner, county farm bureau representative or someone who works or is engaged in the agriculture industry. You may even want to interview a local high school FFA member.

Have your class prepare interview questions and send a copy to the interviewee. This will allow time to make sure the interviewee is prepared and that the interview will go smoothly and be more informative. Younger grades can have the agriculturalist visit the classroom for a class interview. Students in advanced grades can meet with the agriculturalist on their own.

Have students use the knowledge they gained to write a story on the results of their interview.

Sample Interview questions:
- How long have you been involved in agriculture?
- What do you grow/raise? Why did you choose to grow/raise this commodity?
- Why do we only grow certain plants, animals, fruits and vegetables in our county?
- What does it take to grow the fruit/vegetables/livestock/plants in our county?
- How much money does ag provide to our county?
- What kind of soil is found in our county?
- How has the production in our county grown/decreased compared to 20 years ago?

California Standards: ELA CC: W.3-8.7
Activity 2: Add on Story

This activity uses the basic concept of an “add on story” where everyone adds one or two lines to a story. Have students write three agriculturally-related words at the top of a sheet of paper, such as water, grapefruit, tractor.

Have students begin writing a story that incorporates the three words. Stop students a minute or two later, even if they are mid-sentence. The students will then hand the piece of paper to the student behind them and they must build upon the previous student’s story, again trying to incorporate the three words. Encourage students to skim, and then write, as the stories may get quite long. This process is repeated until time is up or everyone has had a chance to add something to each students’ story.

The joy of this exercise is watching the students’ imaginations in play throughout the progression of the stories. This is a good way to introduce students to pre-writing and helping students reconnect ideas to the body of the text.

Example: Soil, ladybug, apple

One day a ladybug decided she wanted to grow an apple. Her only problem was that she didn’t know how. She decided to visit her friend, Shelby Squirrel. Shelby said to grow an apple she would need seeds, soil and water.....
Activity 3: Advanced Acrostic Poems

An acrostic is a structured poem in which the first letter of each line forms a word or phrase, vertically. The poem can describe the subject or tell a brief story about it. This technique will help teach and reinforce parts of speech. Have students write the word ‘Agriculture’ down the middle of a piece of paper. Add a noun to each letter. The next step is to add an adjective that fits the noun, then a verb, then an adverb.

Next, have students write a story using all of the words in their acrostic.

This technique can also be used several times with a range of topics. It familiarizes students with the parts of speech and is a good starting point or summary of a topic.

Example

(Adjective) Noun (Verb)(Adverb)

A pples (Grew) (Slowly)
(The large) G rocery store (Bustled) (Loudly)
R anch hands (Bale) (Quickly)
I nsects
C ow
U nderstock
L ivestock
T omato
U dder
R ooster
E arthworm

California Standards: ELA CC: L.3-8.1; ELA CC: W.3-8.3
Lesson Available from www.writingfix.com, a non-profit site for writers and teachers.
Activity 4: Paragraph Construction: Building a Hamburger

This activity will help students understand the construction of a paragraph so that given a topic they will be able to build a paragraph with clear, logical construction. Clear logical construction will consist of a topic sentence, a minimum of three supporting sentences that are relevant to the topic and a concluding sentence that summarizes the entire paragraph.

Create a model of a hamburger out of construction paper for this example. The model is a visual aid that is used to identify the components of a paragraph.

With your ingredients spread out, announce that we are going to make a hamburger. Construct it starting with the patty and the vegetables and condiments. Exclude the bun – this is an important point. Prompt the class with questions like, “Is this effective?” Why not?” The point is to steer the class towards the fact that the bun is needed to hold the hamburger together.

Ask the students, “Well if you think about it, a hamburger is a lot like a paragraph. Can anyone tell me why?” If any responses are given, use them as a lead-in to the hamburger/paragraph model below.

Top Bun: This is where some of the condiments go which give flavor to the entire hamburger. This is like the **Topic Sentence**, which contains the main idea of the paragraph.

Tomato: This gives the hamburger texture and body and adds a unique taste to it. This is a **Supporting Sentence 1**. Just like everybody likes their hamburgers different, supporting sentences should be different, relating to the main idea.

Lettuce: **Supporting Sentence 2**

Patty: **Supporting Sentence 3**

Bottom Bun: Wraps up the hamburger and gives it something it can sit upon. This is the **Concluding Sentence**. The concluding sentence should summarize the entire paragraph wrapping it up in a neat, nice package.

Pass out copies of a paragraph from an *Imagine this*... story and ask students to identify the different parts of the paragraph. Review the paragraph explaining what each sentence is and its function.

Using the diagram on the next page, have students write a paragraph about agriculture or an agricultural product.

California Standards: ELA CC: W.3-8.3
Hamburger Writing

Main Idea: ____________________________

Detail #1: _______________________________

Detail #2: _______________________________

Detail #3: _______________________________

Closing Sentence: _______________________

Super Teacher Worksheets - www.superteacherworksheets.com
Activity 5: Compare and Contrast

Identifying similarities and differences is an important aspect of writing. This activity will help students learn about new agricultural commodities while practicing comparing and contrasting skills.

Pass out two Agricultural Fact and Activity Sheets to each student along with the attached blank Venn Diagram.

Agricultural Fact and Activity Sheets:
http://learnaboutag.org/resources/fact/entire.pdf

Have younger students work as a group and older students work individually. Ask students to complete the Venn Diagram for their two commodities.

After completing the Venn Diagram, ask students to review these questions:

How are the commodities alike or the same? Words to use: like, same, also, similarly, the same as, in common, both, etc.

How are the commodities different or not the same? Words to use: different, although, on the other hand, contrary, however, unlike, etc.

Have students write 2 paragraphs about how they are similar and how they are different. Encourage students to make deep comparisons as well as surface comparisons. Remind students to use details, examples, and evidence in their paragraphs.

California Standards: ELA CC: RI.3.9; ELA CC: RI.4.6; ELA CC: RI.5.5; ELA CC: RI.6.9; ELA CC: RI.7.7; ELA CC: W.3-8.2
Compare & Contrast

Commodity 1: ________________________

Commodity 2: ________________________
Activity 6: *Imagine this...* Plot Structure & Story Planning

This exercise will help students to brainstorm and organize the plot for their *Imagine this...* story.

To start, pass out copies of a past *Imagine this...* story and have students work in groups to complete the Plot Structure Diagram as they identify the components below.

**Characters:** Identify the characters within the story. Remember the characters listed are those who participate in the action.

**Setting:** Identify the setting of the story. This could include where and/or when the story took place (month, year, time of day, city, country, etc.)

**Conflict:** Describe the conflict in the story. Is there a protagonist (hero) or antagonist (enemy)?

**Resolution:** Describe how the conflict was resolved.

**Turning Point/Climax:** Describe the climax of the story. This is the main event of the story.

**Rising Action:** Describe the major events that lead to the turning point.

**Falling Action:** Describe the major events that lead to the resolution.

**Theme:** Identify the lesson or main message that the author is conveying. Did the protagonist learn anything?

After students have identified the parts of a past *Imagine this...* story, review the components as a class.

Using the *Imagine this...* Story Planner and a blank Plot Structure Diagram, have students work individually to brainstorm the specific parts of their *Imagine this...* story.

California Standards: ELA CC: RL.3-5.1-7; ELA CC: RL.6-8.2-6; ELA CC: W.3-8.3, 5
Imagine this...

**Story Planner**

**Date:** ______________________
**Grade:** ____________________________________
**Written by:** ________________________________

I want to write about_________________________.
(Something we grow in California Agriculture in a positive way)

My story will be: (circle one) Fact Fiction

My story will be titled________________________________________________________________________.

The setting of my story will be______________________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________________

The characters in the story will be______________________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________________

The plot of my story will be______________________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________________

I want _______________________________ to proof read my story.

(For grammar and spelling, less than 750 words, suitable for illustrating, no reference to registered trademarks)

I will type or neatly write my final draft, and give it to my teacher, with the entry form filled out by: __________________________ (date)